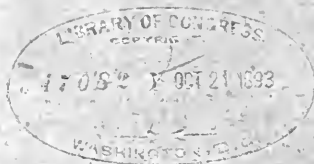


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THE.... GREAT DEBATE

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THE

GREAT DEBATE

Dear Sir,—You wish to know my notion
On sartin pints that rile the land;
There's nothin' that my nature so shuns,
Ez bein' mum or underhand.

I'm a straight-spoken sort o' creetur
Thet blurts right out wut's in his head,
An' ef I've one pecooler feetur,
It is a nose thet wunt be led.

So, to begin at the beginnin',
An' come directly to the pint,
I think the country's underpinnin',
Is some consid'ble out o' jint.

I aint agoin' to try your patience
By tellin' who done this or thet,
I don't make no insinooations,
I jest let on I smell a rat.

—James Russell Lowell in *Bigelow Papers*.

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*OF THIS PAMPHLET 250 COPIES
ARE PRINTED*

TO
THE SILVER-TONGUED SENATORS OF CONGRESS.
WITH KINDEST
FORBEARANCE FOR THEIR PAST, AND WITH MOST CORDIAL HOPES FOR THEIR FUTURE,
THIS LITTLE STORY
IS
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

THE GREAT DEBATE

In the realms of Wonderland,
Where all folks, you understand,
Have no need of common sense,
But only of sweet eloquence,
Once upon a direful time—
If you will believe my rhyme—
There was held a great debate,
Concerning mighty things of State,
The question to be settled was—
What are good financial laws;
Whether gold or silver should
Be the standard of what's good
In the money market; or
Whether silver'd mix with d'or;
Or whether paper greenbacks might
Bring the nation back to light.

This the question—far and near,
Rent by qualms of inward fear.
Came the Senators in state
To attend the great debate.
Scarce a soul of them but knew
Just what the others ought to do
To bring the Ship of State straight back
On the right financial tack.
They came together and then, lo!
Forgetting all they used to know.
They talked and talked until their speech
Flew fairly out of human reach,
Into the upper regions where
Thought becometh merely air.
Still each pressed forward one by one
To see his patriot duty done.

To help his country if he might,
And glean a ray or two of light,
By clearing out a little room
In the dim financial gloom.
The way they did it was by speech,
They talked vast torrents, and then each
Exploding words of noble fire
Sank back contented to admire.
No single man could tell you whence
He had derived such eloquence.
Like some fair, over-modest elf,
Each charmed to death to hear himself,
Amazed to find his words refined,
To wealth he never had divined;
Wooed by music—all his own—
Each like a king upon a throne,
Rising up to heights sublime
Soaring past both Space and Time,
They poured forth golden floods of wit,
E'en adding silver unto it.
However, everybody sought
To do his duty as he ought.
All over-haste was held a crime,
They left poor vulgar haste to Time.
And after reveling in debate
They sat them calmly down to wait—
But not omitting, it is true,
To speak a happy word or two,
To show the country of their keep,
That all of them were not asleep.

Days passed and weeks; and still in state
They held most dignified debate.
Somehow, the bother seemed to be,
That nobody could agree.
At first the Senate atmosphere,
Seemed to be fairly calm and clear,
But as the smoke of conflict rose

Betwixt the gold and silver foes,
There fell a sort of panic rout,
Turning all things inside out;
Midst calm debate wherein a friend
Could see some hope of final end;
Midst gleams of wisdom and of sense
There came that flood of eloquence,
And next a sort of stubborn fit
That put a sudden end to it.
Then all seemed bent to go it blind,
With no attempt to give their mind
Upon the questions grave of state,
Which they had all come to debate;
Some said they could but that they wouldn't,
Some said would but that they couldn't,
Some losing faith their side would win,
Remained at home but were not in;
Though ere they slept, each took great care
To leave the word—he was not there.
Thus although all well understood
What was for the country's good,
After talk and speechifying,
Debates and confabs and replying,
Hobnobbing, whispering, gerrymandering,
Each failed to state his understanding—
Or failed to state it with a vim
That should win the rest to him.
The reason, some men whispered, was
They had lost their faith in laws,
Doubting at the first attack—
The plain and once familiar fact—
Whether law is law at all,
Or only something fanciful.

A flock of geese, you understand,
Had invaded all the land,
Till even sane men really doubted
Whether nonsense could be scouted.

Nay! some indeed held the conviction,
Nonsense was sense and fact was fiction;
Or fiction fact—or at least
Both were raised from the same yeast.
Now one's dough can't well be staked
'Till one's bread has first been baked;
Or 'till one has chance to know
Whither-way the wind will blow.
To be cautious, silent, wise,
Shows a statesman's enterprise.
When one runs a state, you see,
It must be done carefully.
When your dough begins to fall
You needn't do a thing at all!
Wash your hands of the whole matter—
No good cook minds his own batter,
When it turns out less than good,
Or something else than what it should.
Besides, real worry isn't for
The diet of a Senator—
His labor is to gravely choose
Words and phrases for his views.
Then, to sit in stately state,
While he listens to debate.
Tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee,
Is all law is or ought to be,
For that is what our grandsires meant
When they first spelled Government.
If the skies portend a storm,
Men should come away from harm,
And not tempt Fate. For 'tis plain—
Though man makes sun-shades, God makes rain.

Thus the statesmen in debates,
Interfered not with the Fates.
In order that they might advance,
They placed their faith in tide and chance,
Hoping somehow very soon

A lift might come down from the moon.
Now while each member held his place,
Or reclined in easy grace
In a comfortable chair,
Or lived at home on soothing fare,
This the state of things elsewhere—
Banks were broken; credit gone;
Merchants ruined; farms undone;
Factories idle; homes in want;
Men and women pale and gaunt,
Lifting hands in hungry need
Praying for their daily bread.
A million people on their backs,
Stricken down by silver quacks,
Who by using shrewd designs
In the cause of private mines,
Held at bay in grave debate
The wisdom of a mighty state;
By tricks and nostrums made it seem
That good money is a dream,
Ready made to hand, to-wit:
If you just imagine it!
Say: Thus and so it is, you'll see,
Thus and so the fact shall be.
Silver will be gold and then,
Prosperity will come again.

All this chanced, you understand,
Far away in Wonderland,
A pleasant place by angels run,
Who, being silver-tongued each one,
Have no need of common sense,
But only of sweet eloquence.
Therefore, although oft before
And often after, many more
Sessions came in pride together,
To discuss the Nation's weather,
To give their views and to advise
What things for mortals might be wise,
Yet all men living then agreed,
That for pleasure or for need,
Ne'er but once in all that state
Was there heard such great debate.

ON the 15th of August, 1893, a special session of Congress was convened to consider means by which the country might be put back onto its financial feet. Up to the present (October 16th), however, although much has been said, nothing has been done.

Congress talks, the President frowns, the Silverites scheme, and the country still waits.

NOTES

We here append a few opinions of the Country concerning its noble legislators:

A special from New York to the *Chicago Tribune* of Sept. 24, says:—Prominent business men of this city say that immediate and unconditional repeal of the silver bill is the only means of restoring healthy activity to business and confidence to the banks. These are the opinions of men the soundness of whose judgment and common sense in matters of general interest is universally acknowledged.

JERSEY CITY, N. J., Oct. 15.—Rev. M. Gates, pastor of Grace M. E. church on the heights, prayed in his morning services that the Senators of the United States might cease their oratorical displays while hundreds of thousands were in distress and were brought to the verge of starvation by the failure of the Senate to pass the repeal bill to give them relief. In his sermon he said: "I believe that every patriot, regardless of geographical distinction or party affiliation, will agree with me in the feeling that the present extraordinary session of the Senate of the United States is the biggest farce ever convened at the Capitol of this Nation, or any other Nation."

Chicago ————— editorial: The Constitution created a Senate and a House of Representatives and gave to them the law-making power. It was given to them that it might be used, not left in abeyance. It was supposed by the framers of the Constitution that the co-ordinate action of the two branches was secured by the provision requiring them to meet on a given day and forbidding either during a session to adjourn for more than three days without the consent of the other, or to any other place than that in which both were sitting. They did not imagine that one of these branches would remain in session for weeks and months, as inert as "the dull weed that roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf."

New York *Herald* editorial, Oct. 16: The situation in the Senate has passed beyond the stage of a financial debate. It has become a constitutional struggle.

The issue is more than one of legislation vital to the prosperity of the country. It is whether the Senate of the United States can transact business only by leave of any band of filibusters who may see fit to "hold up" the majority,

and whether the country is at the mercy of any half dozen Senators who may choose to set up a Senatorial oligarchy.

On that issue there can be no compromise with honor or safety. There can be no surrender by the majority without cowardice. If the majority must go down in defeat before a rebellious minority, let it go down with its colors nailed to the masthead.

Compromise would be surrender of a vital constitutional principle—the right of the majority to rule and of the Senate to legislate. It would be disastrous to the business interests of the country, and, we may add, disastrous to the record of every sound money Senator yielding to it.

It is as true to-day as it was when Congress met that the unconditional repeal of the suicidal silver law is essential to business prosperity. It is as true now as it was then that unconditional repeal is demanded by the people. It is the almost universal popular belief now, as it was then, that failure to repeal—and compromise would be failure—would leave open the way to one of the worst panics the country has ever known.

— The situation presents but one patriotic course to every Senator who would uphold the constitutional right of the Senate to legislate and who would vote the relief so urgently needed by the nation. That course is to put down obstruction and insist that a vote on unconditional repeal shall be taken.

New Orleans *Picayune* editorial, Oct. 15:

The United States Senate has developed into the most remarkable obstruction to legislation ever known in the world. It is not only able to put its veto on the action of the House, but it has demonstrated the ability of a minority of Senators, and a small one at that, to block the way and utterly to paralyze the power of the majority.

A special telegram to the *Chicago Tribune* from Washington, D. C., Oct. 14, says:—Unconditional silver repeal is dead. It died as liberty may some time die, when a half-hearted, limp and cowardly majority in the Senate shall permit an aggressive, arrogant, and revolutionary minority to rule. The bill is dead because the dominant Democratic majority has declared that it is powerless to overcome the minority.

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